

Virginia Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
Wednesday, July 29, 2015
Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission, Roanoke, Virginia

VRRBAC members present

Tim Pace (chair), Billy Martin (1st Vice Chair), Senator Frank Ruff, Senator William Stanley, Delegate Charles Poindexter, Delegate Tommy Wright, Delegate Sam Rasoul, John Feild, Read Charlton, Christopher Blakeman, Jerry Lovelace, Don Smith, Linda Green (representing Congressman Robert Hurt)

Guests

A. Lester

DEQ Staff present

Scott Kudlas, Curt Thomas

Call to Order

Chairman Pace called the meeting to order.

Recognition of Members and Guests

Chairman Pace welcomed members and guests. Introductions were given. Two new members were officially recognized, Jerry Lovelace and Don Smith.

Update on Kerr Lake Regional Water System Interbasin Transfer Request

Mr. Curt Thomas presented a brief update to the VRRBAC on the status of the Kerr Lake Regional Water System (KLRWS) interbasin transfer (IBT) request. At the time of the meeting, the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) of North Carolina delayed a final determination on the project until their September 10, 2015 meeting in Raleigh, NC. The EMC is reviewing public comments and will submit their determination to the public on September 10, 2015.

Several members asked if the Committee should send a representative to the EMC final determination meeting. After some discussion, Mr. Lovelace offered to make a statement in reference to the VRRBAC public comment letter submitted to the EMC. Chairman Pace motioned for Mr. Lovelace to make a presentation to the EMC; all in favor; motion passed.

*Action Item: Send VRRBAC's KLRWS-IBT public comment letter and Sept. 10
EMC Agenda to Members (completed 07/30/2015)*

Delegate Poindexter brought up the question how a proposed allocation process works with the Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. Pace believed that the main option is to put together a proposal and to purchase an allocation. Senator Stanley asked how much water allocations from the Corps cost and stated that the VRRBAC should think about legislative proposals.

Action Item: Find out how much water allocations cost and send information to Members

Group Discussion Regarding Role and Structure of VRRBAC

Due to a condensed timeframe, the Committee decided to engage the whole group in a discussion focused on the role and structures of the VRRBAC subcommittees. All statements were made as part of a brainstorming session.

Delegate Rasoul mentioned realigning the subcommittees to represent geographic interests, stating that the City of Roanoke is mainly concerned with pollution and tourism whereas other regions have different issues of importance. Several members agreed that different areas of the basin have distinct interests and subcommittees based on the Upper and Lower Roanoke Basin could help focus priorities. Mr. Martin put forward that greater prioritization of issues could help subcommittees work on more specific items, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of meetings.

Chairman Pace asserted that the Committee has mainly centered its work on water, though there is opportunity to explore other natural resource topics related to the Roanoke Basin. Delegate Rasoul felt this could represent a chance to get the public involved in task building in order to improve the Committee's relevance and importance. Members reaffirmed the need to stay relevant and important in regards to the issue of the Basin. Chairman Pace brought up the idea of establishing more of a web presence such as a revamped website or Facebook. DEQ staff would not be able to maintain social media accounts on behalf of the VRRBAC. Senator Stanley recommended that the Committee needs foresight to advise the legislature on issues they may not see coming. This could result in a streamlined approach to issue identification and something that resembles a "committee on the fly".

The following points were recorded as part of a discussion on the specific subcommittees of the VRRBAC based on legislation. The objective was to determine if these subcommittees still fit into the scope of VRRBAC activities.

Permit Holders Subcommittee:

- Serve as a forum for permit holders to discuss relevant topics such as upstream use
- Produce informational quarterly or annual reports of permitted withdrawals & discharges occurring in the Basin
- Publish "Success Stories" of best practices used in the Basin in order to educate and promote environmental stewardship
- Stormwater permits are very relevant and could be the topic of a separate subcommittee
 - Related to TMDLs
- Help inform permit holders about drought condition assessments
- Greater focus on large agriculture and processing plants in regards to water use related to irrigation

River Interests Subcommittee:

- Produce an inventory report on recreational access points and points of interest along the rivers and streams of the Basin

- Mr. Lovelace referenced an old report completed by Subcommittee during the 2nd or 3rd year of the VRRBAC
- Explore opportunities to boost/maintain tourism and economic development around rivers
- Engage in public outreach events such as a river cleanup
- Host or co-host an annual or biannual event such as an Annual Summit or Annual Riverfest
 - Mr. Blakemen informed members about Ferrum College's Roanoke River Currents Bi-Annual Conference, which will be held on October 9, 2015
 - Several members posited the idea of partnering to host a similar conference in the off-years
- Participate in Dan River spill damage projects
- Track gas pipeline projects in the Basin, specifically crosspoints on waterways
- Participate in TMDL implementation plans to try to get people interested in water resources

Action Items: Send the River Interests Subcommittee report on river access points to VRRBAC Members
Send information regarding the Roanoke River Currents Conference to VRRBAC Members (completed 07/30/2015)

Public Officials Subcommittee:

- Serve as a planning/policy and information source for the VRRBAC legislative members on Basin topics
- Provide a forum to recommend important Basin issues to legislators in order to receive feedback
- Maintain inventory of regulatory issues relevant to the VRRBAC

Lake Interests Subcommittee:

- Explore opportunities to boost/maintain tourism and economic development around lakes
- Research and provide recommendations on invasive species, specifically Hydrilla
- Participate in shoreline management planning and water level changes
- Track cross-lake pipeline projects on Smith Mountain Lake

Senator Ruff suggested that the subcommittees could be condensed into three groups: 1.) Recreation 2.) Regulation 3.) Economic Development. After some discussion, several members felt that with such a broad structure, a number of issues would be replicated in multiple groups. No consensus was reached. All members agreed that establishing a strong committee structure is paramount and that a follow-up meeting should be scheduled in the near future.

Other Business

Mr. Smith would like the Committee to investigate the Mountain Valley Pipeline project in further detail, specifically who is overseeing the process of exploration. Mr. Charlton expressed interest in learning more about the pipelines that may run through Virginia.

After serving a long role on the Virginia Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee as well as the Roanoke River Basin Bi-State Commission, Mr. John Feild decided to step down as a member. The VRRBAC wished Mr. Feild all the best and thanked him for his service. He was an integral part to the success of many VRRBAC and RRBBC initiatives.

Next meeting

Members expressed interest in future meetings of the VRRBAC and the Roanoke River Basin Bi-State Commission. Mr. Thomas will be in contact with NC and hopes to arrange a meeting with the Bi-State Commission as soon as possible. Members would like to have a VRRBAC meeting in mid to late September, which will continue the discussion about the committee's structure and role. All suggestions for a time and location can be sent to Curt Thomas via email, Curtis.thomas@deq.virginia.gov, or phone, 804-698-4024.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.